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Approved For Release 2004/07/08 : CIA-RDP79T00975A031200170001-6
Intelligence

Top Secret

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National Intelligence Daily (Cable)

20 March 1979

State Dept. review completed

Top Secret

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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

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AFGHANISTAN: Insurgency

[REDACTED]

Fighting broke out on Thursday between troops and civilians who apparently oppose the Marxist government of President Taraki on religious grounds. Some troops apparently were in the streets shouting Islamic slogans.

[REDACTED] believes that a large part of the infantry division stationed in Herat had deserted to the insurgents.

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More damaging than the near loss of Herat and the defection of some troops there would be the effect on the loyalty and morale of other military units. The armed forces were already unhappy over their involvement in the increasing fighting against tribes in the east.

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Kabul has accused the Iranians of infiltrating 7,000 men into the Herat area and of murdering 3,000 Afghan workers in Iran. The charges are intended primarily to counteract widespread rumors of rebel successes but may also reflect a belief that Iran helped instigate the Herat rebellion. There is no good evidence of Iranian involvement in the current clashes, but the new leaders in Tehran have made no secret of their opposition to the leftist regime in Kabul. Iran has closed its border with Afghanistan.

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[REDACTED] special flights had evacuated Czechoslovak and Soviet technicians from Herat; two of the Soviets allegedly died in the fighting. The US Embassy in Kabul has also learned [REDACTED] that the Soviets on Sunday removed to Kabul all of their technical personnel in a textile plant project in southern Afghanistan.

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USSR-AFGHANISTAN: Soviet Warning

Moscow's decision to publish an authoritative "I. Aleksandrov" article in Pravda yesterday alleging that Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, and China are interfering in Afghan internal affairs probably is aimed at deterring these countries from actively supporting opponents of President Taraki. The warning apparently was triggered by the outbreak of significant urban opposition to Taraki and Moscow's worry that the Pakistani-based Afghan exiles who recently declared a "holy war" against the Taraki regime might attract significant foreign support. [redacted]

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The author is much harder on the Pakistanis and the Chinese than on the Iranians, which suggests that Moscow does not want to upset the new Iranian Government unduly. Soviet concern about Iran's capability to meddle, however, is reflected in the decision to replay in Pravda--in a separate, less authoritative piece--Kabul radio's charge that disguised Iranian soldiers are behind the current unrest in Herat. [redacted]

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The Aleksandrov article reiterates that the Soviet people support the Afghan Government but does not invoke any of the USSR's treaties with Afghanistan, and there are no other indications for now as to how Moscow might respond to further opposition to Taraki. [redacted]

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GRENADE: New Government

The new socialist regime in Grenada has effectively consolidated its control and is concentrating on gaining international recognition. Aside from general pronouncements meant to reassure its neighbors, however, the evolving government of Maurice Bishop has yet to detail convincingly its future policies. 25X1

Other Caribbean states have delayed recognizing the New Jewel Movement's regime because the smaller islands fear the precedent for coups. Last week's meeting of the Caribbean Common Market was inconclusive; representatives of the smaller West Indies Associated States will meet today in another attempt to determine a common position. The left-leaning administrations of Jamaica and Guyana will probably extend recognition soon in any case. 25X1

//Cuba has limited itself to cautious press treatment to avoid making the new regime appear too radical.

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We have no confirmation of substantial foreign involvement in the coup; Bishop has made several statements that seem purposely misleading--for instance, that his movement was given arms by disaffected Grenadian security personnel. 25X1

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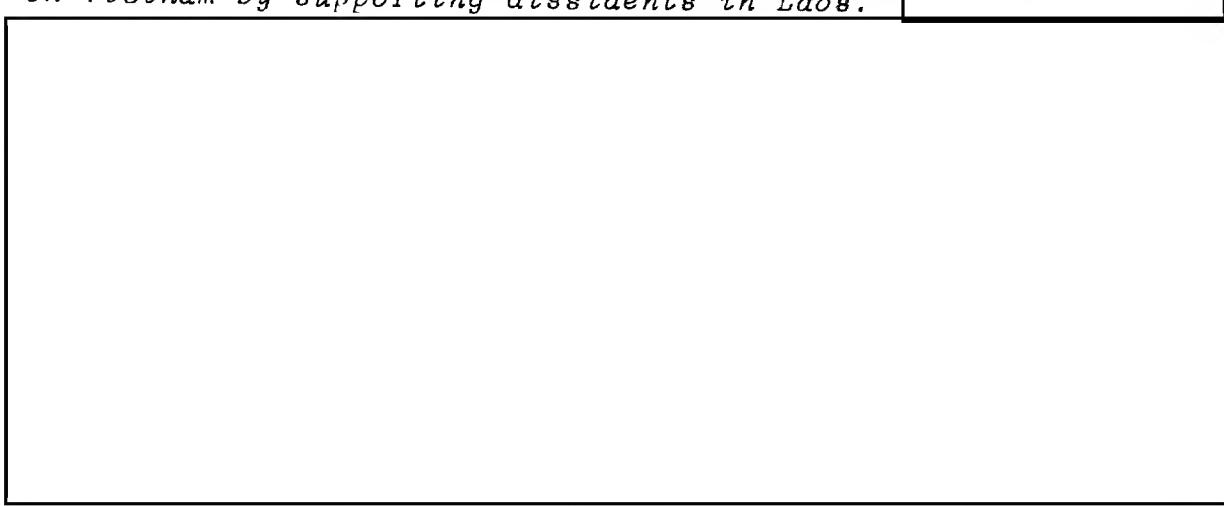


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LAOS-CHINA: Reports of Incursions

Accusations of Chinese aggression against Laos have come as much from the USSR and Vietnam as from Laos, which suggests that the Lao-Chinese relationship has been manipulated in order to portray China as posing an "annexationist" threat. Until Laos leveled its charges, China continued its aid and roadbuilding projects in Laos that had been reduced at Laotian request last year. Chinese diplomats, moreover, routinely expressed "understanding" for the Lao Government's dependence on Vietnam and sounded the same theme in a Foreign Ministry note on 10 March responding to the Lao denunciations. The note went on, however, to deliver a veiled threat of Chinese support to Lao resistance groups. China had previously quashed rumors of contacts with resistance forces, but it may now believe it has an opportunity to put pressure on Vietnam by supporting dissidents in Laos.

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RHODESIA: Preelection Atmospherics

//Campaigning for the national election next month is gathering momentum. Political violence is also increasing, particularly in rural areas.

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[redacted] the government's plan for a "rolling" election in which security forces move from one polling area to another over a five-day period should assure a respectable voter turnout. All able-bodied white males will be drafted for security duty during the election. Whatever the outcome, Rhodesia's whites will remain in a good position to determine the policies of the new black-led government.//

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//The front-running candidate to lead the new government is Bishop Abel Muzorewa, leader of the United African National Council. Muzorewa's last major rally drew more than 120,000 people

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[redacted]
//Among Rhodesia's whites, the field has been left entirely to Prime Minister Smith's Rhodesian Front party. Smith's determination to stand for election--his name heads the list of his party's candidates--caused consternation among several officials in the transitional government who believe that his continued political participation will destroy the election's credibility. A number of other white ministers unacceptable to blacks will be running unopposed and will expect cabinet positions in the new government.

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[redacted]

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USSR: Relations with US

Speeches by Soviet leaders prior to the Supreme Soviet election on 4 March, full texts of which have recently become available, revealed a mixture of hope that a SALT agreement may soon be reached along with considerable uneasiness about the overall course of Soviet-US relations. They reveal a generally tepid endorsement of detente by Soviet leaders, particularly when contrasted with the previous round of such speeches in 1974.

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President Brezhnev was alone in his positive assessment of Soviet-American relations. He treated the subject almost solely within the context of SALT and emphasized the benefits of a SALT II agreement. Brezhnev was careful, however, to make qualifications that reflected the statements of his colleagues. His emphasis on the need for ratification of a SALT agreement, for instance, acknowledged Soviet concerns over the fate of the treaty in the Senate.

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Brezhnev, moreover, concluded his speech by asserting that the USSR would continue its policies in the Third World. He thus aligned himself with other speakers in signaling his refusal to accept linkage between SALT and Soviet policies elsewhere. This suggests that, even as he sought to convey a sense of hope for SALT and implicitly for Soviet-US relations, Brezhnev was making certain that his colleagues knew he was not abandoning other basic elements of Soviet policy.

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Foreign Minister Gromyko appeared to represent the consensus of the other speakers in conveying a sense of exasperation with US policy as well as what appeared to be resignation that a "smoothing out" of relations was the best that could be hoped for. The general pessimism about Soviet-US relations can be attributed to Moscow's frustration with what it sees as "vacillations" in US policy and possibilities for Chinese-US collusion.

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The speeches suggest that the Soviet leaders have little expectation of progress on other fronts until SALT II is ratified. Even this hope, however, appears qualified by concern that the US may be subordinating SALT to greater cooperation with China.

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USSR: Reaction to Middle East Treaty

Soviet reaction to the impending Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement has been unreservedly negative, a reflection of Moscow's longstanding opposition to any separate settlement. No Soviet leader has publicly discussed President Carter's initiative, but Soviet commentary has criticized US efforts and the treaty's failure to deal with Palestinian demands and the issue of Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territory. Moscow is particularly concerned about the possibility the US will establish a military presence in the area and has updated old charges of US plans for regional security alliances and military intervention to protect US strategic interests. An authoritative article in *Pravda* on Saturday said that the US, by forcing Egyptian President Sadat to "capitulate" to US demands, has ignored Arab interests and is laying the groundwork for a dangerous new heightening of tension in the region. [redacted]

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IRAN-PAKISTAN: Nonaligned Movement

Deputy Prime Minister Entezam announced on Sunday that Iran has formally applied for membership in the Nonaligned Movement. The Nonaligned Foreign Ministers will review the application at their meeting in Sri Lanka in June. Iran's decision followed its announcement that it was withdrawing from CENTO. Pakistan is also expected to seek Nonaligned membership. Its withdrawal from CENTO removes the excuse India has used to prevent Pakistan from joining the Movement. [redacted]

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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

IRAN: Restive Minorities

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Iran's ethnic minorities, who now make up almost half the country's population, are reasserting the separatist pressures they have exerted through history at times when central control has weakened. Kurdish tribesmen in the northwest have already established de facto autonomy; Turkomen in the north, Baluchis in the southeast, and Arabs in the southwest are seeking similar status. Iran's new national leaders have strongly opposed demands for decentralization, but the central government lacks the armed forces to prevent the minorities from implementing some of their proposals. The persistence of tribal dissidence provides a temptation for foreign nations to become involved.

The North

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Kurdish spokesmen assert that they do not want independence, but say the tribe will fight for its rights if necessary. Their program, made public at a rally attended by 200,000 Kurds on 2 March, calls for:

- Control of an area determined by "historic, economic, and geographic" considerations. In Iran, this means Kordestan Province and large parts of neighboring provinces, but the Kurds aspire to control Kurdish-inhabited parts of Iraq and Turkey as well.
- A popularly elected Kurdish regional parliament and local control of all government, law enforcement, and military units.
- Use of Kurdish in the schools and as the autonomous area's official language.
- Guaranteed freedom of speech, press, association, travel, employment, and unionization.

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Tribal differences are strong among the Kurds and may erupt as dissident Kurdish leaders try to consolidate their control. The foremost Kurdish religious leader, Ezzedin Hosseini, is accepted as the tribe's spokesman, but leaders of the resurrected leftist Kurdish Democratic Party, as well as other parties and guerrilla groups, claim tribal loyalties. [Redacted]

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Serious clashes between unidentified Kurdish dissidents and government forces in and around the provincial capital of Sanandaj yesterday left at least 170 dead, according to press reports. The dissidents seized the radio station, police barracks, and a military headquarters building before a cease-fire was arranged. [Redacted]

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Some of the approximately 600,000 Turkomen, who are also Sunnis and are scattered throughout the northern provinces, are now demanding autonomy. Recent Turkomen demonstrations in towns along the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea near the Soviet border--in one case 30,000 tribesmen participated--resulted in three deaths; a general strike closed schools and government offices.

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//The Shia Azarbayanis, Iran's largest minority with more than 5 million members, have resurrected their principal nationalist party, which--like its Kurdish counterpart--briefly led an independent tribal republic under Soviet tutelage after World War II. So far, the Azarbayanis have not publicized any specific demands,

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[Redacted] --continued

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The Southeast

The estimated 600,000 Baluchis, Sunnis who inhabit the barren southeastern area, have been relatively quiet. Tribal, religious, and academic leaders, representing the small Islamic Unity Party the Baluchis formed four months ago, met late last month with Khomeini and the Interior Minister. Party leader Maulavi Abdul Aziz, a Sunni cleric, told a Western reporter that Khomeini and the minister agreed to appoint Baluchis to civilian and military provincial posts, to allow schools to use Baluchi and teach Sunni rites, and to consider increased investment in the area by the central government. 25X1

Angered by later remarks by Khomeini that seemed to renege on a promise to treat Sunnis equally with the Shia majority, 3,000 to 4,000 Baluchis staged a protest demonstration in the provincial capital of Zahedan on 12 March. Unity Party leaders have now demanded written confirmation of the government's promises and have called for guarantees of tribal autonomy in the new constitution and for full tribal representation in the constituent assembly that will ratify it. 25X1

Baluchi leaders say they were recently contacted by Kurdish leaders. Cooperation among the major tribes would greatly magnify the government's problems. 25X1

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The Southwest

An estimated 10,000 Arabs marched on 10 March in Ahvaz, the major city in Iran's oil-producing area, to demand autonomy, according to the local press. 25X1

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Government Attitudes and Foreign Involvement

Government spokesmen, while admitting that the minorities do have some legitimate claims, have been publicly opposing decentralization, denouncing separatism, and suggesting that the minorities be patient. With the military in disarray, however, Tehran has no choice but to try to negotiate with the tribes in hopes of developing a modus vivendi that gives away as little as possible and limits their susceptibility to foreign influences.

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